

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

A NEW ANTHOLOGY.

ENGLISH VERSES. Edited by W. J. LINTON and R. H. STODDARD. Two vols., 12mo. pp. 131, 331; \$1.25. Charles Scribner's Sons.

The new collection of English poetry of which an instalment is here presented to the public, is to comprise five volumes, each having a certain independent completeness and each purchasable separately. The first volume covers the whole field from the beginning of English poetry in Chaucer to the sudden outbreak of modern song in Burns. The second embraces the "Lyrics of the XIXth Century" from Wordsworth to our own day, ample space being allotted to living singers on both sides of the ocean. A third volume will be devoted to "Ballads and Romances," a fourth to "Dramatic Selections," and the fifth and last to "Translations." Mr. Stoddard writes a critical and historical introduction to each volume, and each has its own biographical appendix and explanatory notes. The books are to be praised for their convenient size, clear and hand-some type, neat binding, and an attractive arrangement of the page.

There is no preface to tell us precisely what the scheme of the editors was in undertaking this new anthology; they modestly leave it to speak for itself; but a circular from the publishers declares that the work was directly suggested by the defects of the existing collections, and that it especially excels its predecessors in comprehensiveness and in absolute accuracy of text. The purification of the text has been the particular study of Mr. Linton, who has spent a year entirely in the minute comparison of editions and critical commentaries in the library of the British Museum. This is a labor for which he deserves the warmest thanks of all students of poetry, and if it has been successfully performed—which we see no reason to doubt—it will give these volumes a very high value. The brief notes are not to be taken as the measure of this task, but they show close, acute and intelligent research, and many of them are extremely interesting. In the work of selection the editors have displayed a fastidious taste. We should expect no less, indeed, from such experienced and accomplished critics of poetry as Messrs. Linton and Stoddard. In the few instances in which we were disposed at first to find fault with their choice of specimens, we have generally decided on further reflection that, considering the limitations of their plan, their judgment was right—right at least so far as this, that whatever they have admitted has a title to be here. Whether they have always made the best possible choice is a question upon which critics must be expected to differ. But it will be conceded that the general level of merit in their selections is high, and that the fidelity with which they have maintained this high standard is one of their strongest claims to our favor.

With the ballads, translations and dramatic specimens, there is no doubt that this collection will be much fuller than any rival publication, and even the two volumes now before us contain many notable things not to be found in the most satisfactory of the previous collections, namely, in Ward's "English Poets." Apart from living writers, who are not included in Ward's plan, the most important additions made by Messrs. Linton and Stoddard to the standard anthologies are from the minor poets of the sixteenth century. If these neglected singers exerted no great influence upon the development of English poetry, they at least left many charming pieces which betray a true poetic spirit in the quaint disguise of their time. John Heywood, John Harrington, Barnabe Googe, John Davies, of Hereford, Francis and Walter Davison are a few of the old worthies who are here set forth again in the light; and it may be said in general that the sixteenth century period is treated by our editors with especial thoroughness. The verse of an earlier date, which after all has an antiquarian rather than a poetical interest, is more fully exhibited in Ward. Perhaps we can well spare it. When we come to the writers of the eighteenth century the peculiarities of the new collection are noticeable. Mr. Stoddard has some remarks upon the sterility of that age, and the essentially prosaic character of the compositions which passed for poetry during the era of which Pope was the central figure; but whatever may be thought of those productions as "poetry," there should be no question of their importance in a survey of "English verse." Not only in the matter of literary style, but in certain intellectual qualities also, the poets of the artificial school have a significance in the history of English letters which no critics dispute. Yet there is a host of prominent names in this class which Messrs. Linton and Stoddard, through their work, and perhaps much unfairly, have omitted, with many unprinted verses and a valuable bibliography. The copious stores of biographical and anecdotal matter here preserved, and received from many friends and kinship of the poets, are particularly welcome. The names of several of the minor poets of Ward and other localities hitherto unknown bring new light on some of his obscure works.

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